

Soprano Voice Senior Honors Recital

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Kelsey Coram

Thesis Advisor
Dr. Meryl Mantione

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Meryl E. Mantione". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small dot above the 'i' in Mantione.

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Abstract

My Senior Honors recital consisted of repertoire from multiple genres and composers. My goal with this project was to show my development in voice study. The audience was provided with translations to assist in understanding the Italian and German pieces. The following is an artist's statement explaining why I chose the pieces I did as well as reflecting upon the process of preparing these pieces for the recital.

Acknowledgements

-My voice teacher, Dr. Meryl Mantione, for kicking me in the butt for the past four years. She has encouraged me and taught me things that I will use for the rest of my life. It wasn't always easy, but it was what I needed.

-Yoonsung Yeo, for accompanying me on the piano during this entire process. You covered for me when I made a mistake, and enhanced my musicianship with your wonderful playing.

-Claire Lefkowicz, for singing the duet with me. We'll have to find a way to do it again.

-The Mantione studio class for giving me advice and supporting me with each Friday performance. Each semester was a great group to work with.

-Those in attendance at the actual recital. You were all so supportive before, during, and after the recital. I am so happy that you were able to make it and hope you enjoyed at least one song.

-My family who traveled from as far as Michigan to hear me perform. It was such a surprise and a treat to get to sing for you.

-My parents, who have supported me throughout my musical experience. The best way I can think to pay you back for the car trips to practices, financial support, and understanding when I was acting crazy is to sing this recital for you (and get a job once I graduate).

There are several things to consider when putting a solo voice recital together.

When choosing repertoire one must consider several things: what do I need in the recital (if it is being performed as a class requirement), what songs will be good for my voice, how much music should I perform, what would the audience appreciate hearing, and what do I really want in the recital. I also wanted to make sure that the music I chose showcased a variety of different musical styles and time periods. While, this may not have been at the forefront of my thought process, it was important to consider. In my situation, some of these decisions were made simpler by class necessity. Others required extensive thought and a bit of stubbornness.

First and foremost, I needed to choose pieces in three different languages. In my previous three years of voice study, I have sung Italian, German, French, and English. I was obviously going to do some songs in English. Relating to audience consideration, most of my friends and family only speak English. Therefore, I know they are more likely to enjoy songs that they can understand. I chose to also sing Italian because the sound of the vowels. Italian vowels are pure, without diphthongs and triphthongs, which makes them less prone to Americanization, and therefore more authentic. Finally, I decided to sing in German. For those who may not be familiar with voice study, it might seem that German is a harsh language to sing. Truth be told, I thought the same thing before singing it. However, its tendencies and flow are actually somewhat similar to English in the way we inflect our words. Again, I felt I would my performance would be more authentic singing German than French.

Beyond just the language, I had to consider Ball State School of Music Standards.

Generally, students studying voice for a major or minor are required to study traditional art

songs and arias. To the average audience member, these would be considered classical pieces (not to be confused with the Classical era of music). These songs promote healthy singing and challenge students in regards to vocal technique. Because the voice department is focused on this repertoire, the majority of the program needed to consist of art songs and arias. In my recital, art songs and arias made up 66% of the selections. While there may have been other expectations or implied guidelines, I managed to choose the remaining repertoire based upon my own desires.

Once I had established guidelines, I could look at arias that would fit this criterion. Instead of learning all new repertoire for this recital, I thought it wisest to perform pieces from previous semesters, considering the timing of the recital and knowing my personal schedule. I sat down with my voice teacher, Dr. Meryl Mantione, and looked through all the pieces that I had sung in the past three years. Of the twenty-four that I had sung, twenty-one of them were art songs or arias in one of the three languages I had chosen. From there we picked the pieces that we both enjoyed singing or working on. This included “Deh vieni non tardar” from *Le Nozze di Figaro* by Mozart, “Fair Robin I Love” from *Tartuffe* by Kirke Mechem, and “Nancy Hanks” by Katherine K. Davis in 1941. These pieces fit the timbre of my voice and had a story to tell.

Once those songs were chosen, I needed to consider how long I wanted the recital to be. That would then dictate how many more pieces I could pick to fill the program. These three songs would be about twelve minutes long. I had to consider what I am physically capable of and the stamina required to sing the entire program. Singing using proper technique is exhausting. A half hour would be too short. Anything longer than an hour is too long, unless the performer is a professional. My goal was to keep the recital around

forty or fifty minutes long with the intermission. This left me with another half hour or forty minutes to fill.

Going along with time, I had to consider the audience. While most of this performance is for me, the concept of performing is to entertain people. Most people have been to a recital and experienced the feeling of restlessness when a performance is too long. The chairs are not comfortable. The mind wanders. The entire recital suffers because all the audience members remember by the end is wanting it to be over. To prevent this, recitals must be planned to maintain audience attention, which means within a reasonable time limit. Part of maintaining audience attention has to do with language. Many of the people in attendance were voice students who are used to hearing repertoire sung in a variety of languages. My family has not studied voice. As such, most of the recital needed to be in English. To mitigate this, a song translation was provided. This is helpful, but in my experience, it can be a distraction from the actual performance.

Two more pieces that I enjoyed were by Richard Strauss: "Traum durch die Dämmerung" written in 1895 and "Ich trage meine Minne" written in 1896. These pieces, which were written in the late romantic era, include sweeping melodic lines and exaggerated dynamic changes making them a good contrast to the pieces already chosen. The first piece of the two that I sang, "Traum durch die Dämmerung" is a setting of a poem by Otto Julius Bierbaum that is somewhat difficult to explain. He includes imagery of stars, a meadow, gentle light, and other things in nature that create a sense of peaceful love. It isn't a love that is overly dramatic or passionate. Instead it attempts to describe this feeling as a comfort or bliss. Strauss emphasizes this with a melody that rocks the singer and listener into a trance almost as if it were a lullaby. The second piece, "Ich Trage Meine

Minne” is a setting of a poem by Karl Henckell in which he describes a person he loves that is so wonderful, he or she diminishes any worry or evil that he encounters. These pieces, though not written by the same poet, both approach love in the same manner, making them ideal for a set in the recital. They also filled the need for German repertoire. Once these five pieces were chosen, we began looking for pieces that would fit in. I could not add many big arias, because doing so would minimize the power of the pieces I had already chosen. Adding more German pieces would be too much for the audience.

Knowing that I was required to sing in at least three different languages and I did not want to sing French, I needed an Italian set. Two pieces, “Se Florindo è fedele” by Alessandro Scarlatti and “Sento nel core” by Stefano Donaudy, had been solid songs that I could consistently perform well. “Se Florindo è fedele” is an aria from *La donna ancor è fedele* Scarlatti composed with librettist Domenico Contini in 1698. This would fall under the baroque era and follows the standard da capo form typical of arias in this time period. In this aria, the character Alidoro explains that he will remain faithful only if Florinda is faithful. The version I sang was altered to be a woman (Alidora) singing about a man (Florindo). “Sento nel core” is a short piece about the aching feeling that people encounter when falling in love. While the poet is unknown, this is actually a modern setting (some time between 1879 and 1925) of a piece written by Alessandro Scarlatti. This made them an ideal pairing when organizing the pieces for the recital.

The next piece I chose was a twentieth century piece by William Schuman called “Orpheus With His Lute” written in 1944. The text was taken from Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII* Act 3, Scene 1. In this scene, Queen Katharine is in her room merely singing for her own enjoyment. This poem was intended to be sung, however there is no notation included

for those reading the play. If I were to study this further, I would be curious to find out how the content of the play influenced Schuman's compositional choices. This song was from my first semester of study at Ball State. While it was not one of my favorites, it allowed me to reflect on those things that I have improved upon as well as the things that still are concerns. It also fit well with the tone and time period of "Nancy Hanks."

When choosing this repertoire, I also had to consider different styles and time periods. Because this was my senior, capstone recital, it needed to show as much of my studies as possible. This meant choosing pieces from multiple musical eras. With the baroque pieces, I could sing the standard da capo arias and use ornamentation typical of the time. The classical pieces required very precise control. The romantic pieces needed to show extreme emotion through application of dynamics and sweeping phrases while still maintaining control of the voice. The contemporary pieces required a bit more interpretation as to what style the composer was trying to create or emulate. The theater pieces required more of a chest voice without hindering the technique I had developed. By the end of the recital, I should have shown my range as well as my development.

Finally, I needed to consider what I wanted to sing. I have grown to respect and enjoy art songs and arias with time. However, I wanted to include songs that I felt truly represented what I love and how I love to sing; I began looking for musical theater pieces. This should have been an easy thing to do. For years I have been listening to these songs, finding songs that I wanted to sing. The problem was there were so many. Eventually I did pick three pieces that I could sing well, find the sheet music for, and that I loved. These songs were "Your Daddy's Son" from the musical *Ragtime*, "Crazy Dreams", and "They Just Keep Moving the Line" from *Smash*.

The first, “Your Daddy’s Son” from the musical *Ragtime*, was written in 1998 with lyrics by Lynn Ahrens and music by Stephen Flaherty. The story was taken from the novel of the same name written by E.L. Doctorow. The song is sung by an African American woman, Sarah, who has just had a baby and does not know where the father is. Before the song, Sarah buried the baby knowing that she could not take care of it. It was found by a wealthy white woman who notified the police. When the police found Sarah, the white woman, for some reason, offered to be responsible for Sarah and her baby. She offered them her home instead of allowing her to be taken to jail. Sarah sings this song to her baby boy trying to explain why she did what she did to him and begging for forgiveness. I wanted to sing this piece now knowing that as a white woman, there would not be an opportunity to play this part.

“Crazy Dreams” while from the television series *Smash* about creating a musical, is not from a musical. It is a pop tune originally sung by Carrie Underwood from 2007. Originally, the song was more upbeat and included typical country elements like guitar and a bit of vocal twang. However, the *Smash* arrangement was slower and had a simple piano accompaniment. It was less of an anthem and more gentle and touching. The message in this piece is simple, keep going and eventually things will work out. While it was not the most interesting musically, it was a song that my mom and I had both liked and I knew I wanted to sing it for her. Even though I knew the voice faculty might fight me on it, it was a song that I needed to sing.

The final song of the show was “They Just Keep Movin’ the Line” written by Marc Shaiman in 2012. In the context of the television show *Smash*, it was written for the fictional musical *Bombshell*. *Bombshell* tells the story of Marilyn Monroe. Because there is

no full libretto for *Bombshell*, I can only assume that the song, which Marilyn sings, is sung at a difficult point in her life. The song itself has a big band feel, using swung rhythms and a large range. Again, this was not the typical song choice for a Ball State University voice recital.

With that I could have had a wonderful recital with multiple styles. However, I also really enjoy singing with other people. My friend Claire Lefkowicz and I decided that we needed to do a duet together. Musical theater was our first choice. Somehow, we came across the piece "Flight" by Craig Carnelia. I could not determine whether it was from a musical or when exactly it was written. However, knowing that Craig Carnelia was born in 1949 it is safe to call it a contemporary piece. While technically I could not definitively call it a musical theater piece, it falls within that genre based on Carnelia's other works. Originally, it was written for a male soloist, but the version I first heard was a duet between two women. The composer wrote this piece with the most dissonant harmonies and yet it sounds so simple. This song quickly became my favorite just because of how much better two voices sound together versus one alone.

Once the repertoire was chosen, I had to begin work learning the new pieces and relearning the old. Some songs were easier to relearn than others. The Strauss pieces and "Nancy Hanks" were all from the previous semester, so they were still fresh in my mind and secure in my singing technique. "Orpheus with his Lute" was from my first semester of study and while it was short, there were notes and old habits that started to creep in making it more difficult than it initially appeared. Learning the new material, the musical theater pieces and the duet, was easier than expected. I had listened to most of them on repeat for months and even years prior to choosing them. They were, however, somewhat

harder to clean because it was a different style and I applied some old technique instead of adapting them to the way I should be singing.

Each piece posed slightly different problems, but the overarching theme was a lack of power. I had trouble projecting my voice in a healthy way. There was a mental block that kept me from relaxing and letting the sound out. My throat would tighten and cause the tone to become strident. It did get better as the semester went on, but there were only one or two times when I was truly able to relax and produce a resonant, full sound singing those high notes.

As part of my preparation, I spent time looking at the content of each piece. One of the great things about vocal music is the opportunity to study the story or poetry. One great example of this was “Nancy Hanks.” If someone did not know who Nancy Hanks was, they could just look at the text and find that she was Abraham Lincoln’s mother. It would be possible to give a good performance without looking any further into it. Dr. Mantione, being an educator as well as a vocal instructor, encouraged me to do a bit of research just to get a better understanding of the situation. Nancy Hanks and Abraham’s father, Thomas, raised him with strict religious and moral beliefs. They both opposed alcohol, dancing, and slavery. Around the time the family moved to Indiana, she died of milk sickness which results from drinking milk of a cow who has eaten white snakeroot. Abraham was nine years old at the time. Knowing this, and having learned about Abraham Lincoln throughout my seventeen years of education, adds an extra layer to the performance.

The poet, Rosemary Benet, was able to develop the story enough for the audience to understand in the first few sections. The final verse is my favorite because there is a sad irony to what she is asking in the poem. All of the questions are things any mother would

want to know. The average audience member can answer these questions because Abraham Lincoln went above and beyond becoming one of the most famous presidents in United States history. His success makes it even more heartbreaking that his mother did not get a chance to see it. Having looked up her background and how she lived and died enhanced my personal connection to the song. I was actually feeling the emotion behind the song instead of just trying to act it.

I did the same sort of research for the two arias, “Deh vieni non tardar” and “Fair Robin I Love.” The former is an aria from Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*) with text by Lorenzo da Ponte. Written in 1785, it falls within the classical era and is considered an “opera buffa” or comic opera. The latter piece is from *Tartuffe* by Kirke Mechem, which premiered in 1980. It is based on the play of the same name by Molière (aka Jean-Baptiste Poquelin) written in 1664. Understanding the content of these pieces was a bit more complicated because they belonged in an opera. In order to understand the context of each aria, I needed to learn about the characters and their places within these operas. Many operas are notoriously crazy and convoluted. There is often a case of mistaken identity, a love triangle, and/or elaborate schemes to prove that someone is a cad. As such, I focused my attention on the characters I was portraying and the plot points that immediately affected them.

The characters in these two operas are actually very similar. They are both maids with a bit of sassiness. In “Deh Vieni non Tardar” I play Susanna, who is getting married to Figaro. The issue is, the Count whom they work for, wants to reinstate an old custom in which the Count gets to sleep with the maid on her wedding night. Obviously, this is an absolutely ridiculous idea from the modern-day perspective. However, at the time it was

commonplace. By addressing this custom, Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte are trying to bring this unfair social imbalance to light. Figaro manages to mishear something and now thinks that Susanna actually wants to sleep with the Count. When Susanna finds out what he thinks, she decides to toy with him a bit. In this aria, she sings of her love and how excited she is to be with him implying she is singing about the Count, knowing that Figaro is watching her.

In *Tartuffe*, there is a similar situation involving a creepy suitor, an innocent girl named Mariane, and her true love. My character, Dorine, is a secondary character. During this aria, she is giving Mariane advice regarding the love triangle that she is in the middle of. She basically tells this girl that she should just marry the creepy suitor and continue having fun with the guy she loves. It is a very cynical and cavalier view of love and marriage that I had trouble connecting with at first. However, over time I was able to better portray the character merely by taking the piece less seriously. Thinking too much was preventing me from embracing the character as simply that: a character.

The foreign language pieces were much more difficult to connect with. I had to understand the meaning of each and every word well enough to apply proper phrasing and expression. In order to achieve this, I wrote literal translations of each word in my sheet music. I also included the appropriate International Phonetic Alphabet symbols to help with pronunciation. Looking back, I think I could have been more detailed in my word-by-word translations. If asked, I would know key words, but was not able to memorize the translations completely by the performance.

The musical theater pieces were the most difficult for me to practice and adapt. For years, I had been working to remove the bad habits that came with singing musical theater.

Now, I was going to try and apply what I learned while trying to be authentic to the “belting” style. This was especially true with “They Just Keep Moving the Line.” I had heard the song in Spring of 2013 and thought it was absolutely perfect for my voice. The belting notes did not go too high and the story was something I was able to connect with easily. However, singing the piece as I wanted became a struggle. For years, I had built up the anticipation of getting to belt out a musical theater piece for my recital. The pressure of expectations from both my peers and me was affecting my confidence. Letting the notes out became very difficult. I would want to relax and just sing the note, but my nerves would limit how much I could do. While this did get better by the final week, the pressure still made that last song an uphill battle.

Looking back on the process, there are a few things I am very proud of, and a few things I would have done differently. I would reconsider some of the song choices as well as the order. All of the pieces would require more practice and finesse. What is wonderful about performing is that I could do it all over again and make the changes I want. I could reuse some of this material or put together an entirely new recital. That is the essence of being a performer; we look at the things we would change or fix if we did it over again. What is important is that I enjoyed it and those who came to see me enjoyed it.

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Recital Translations

Se Florindo e fedele

Se Florindo è fedele, lo m'innamorerò.
Potrà ben l'arco tendere Il faretrato arcier,

Ch'io mi saprò difendere da un guardo
lusinghier.

Pregghi, pianti e querele lo non ascolterò,
Ma se sarà fedele, lo mi'nnamorerò.

If Florindo is faithful, I will fall in love.
The quivered archer will be able to draw the
bow,
For I will know how to defend from flattering
glance.
Pleas, tears, and laments I will not hear,
But if he is faithful, I will fall in love.

Sento nel core

Sento nel core certo dolore,
Che la mia pace turbando va.
Splende una face che l'alma accende,
Se non è amore, amor sara.

I feel in my heart a certain suffering,
Which disturbs my peace.
A torch shines that inflames my soul,
If it is not yet love, then love it shall be.

Deh vieni, non tardar

Giunse alfin il momento
 Che godrò senz'affanno
 In braccio all'idol mio.
 Timide cure uscite dal mio petto;
 A turbar non venite il mio diletto.
 O come par che all'amoroso foco
 L'amenità del loco,
 La terra e il ciel responda
 Come la notte i furti miei seconda.

Deh vieni, non tardar, o gioja bella.
 Vieni ove amore per goder t'appella
 Finche non splende in ciel notturna face.

Finchè l'aria e ancor bruna,
 E il mondo tace.
 Qui mormora il ruscel, qui scherza l'aura
 Ch ecol dolce susurro il cor ristaura.
 Qui ridono I fioretti e l'erba è fresca.

Ai piaceri d'amor qui tutto adescia.

Vieni, ben mio, tra queste piante ascose.
 Vieni, vieni!
 Ti vo' la fronte incoronar di rose.

The moment has finally arrived
 That without worry I will enjoy
 Being in the arms of my beloved.
 Timid worries, leave my heart;
 Do not come to disturb my pleasure.
 Oh, how it seems to the amorous fires
 This comfortable place,
 The earth and heaven respond
 As the night is good for my deception.

O, come, don't delay my beautiful delight.
 Come where love calls you to enjoyment
 Until night's torches no longer shine in the sky.

As long as the air is still dark,
 And the world quiet.
 Here the river murmurs and the light plays
 That restores the heart with sweet ripples.
 Here, little flowers laugh and the grass is fresh.

Here, everything entices one to love's pleasures.

Come, my dear, among these hidden plants.
 Come, come!
 I want to crown you with roses.

Traum durch die Dämmerung

Weite Wiesen im Dämmergrau;
Die Sonne verglomm, die Sterne ziehn.
Nun geh' ich hin zu der schönsten Frau.

Weit über Wiesen im Dämmergrau,

Tief in den Busch con Jasmin.
Durch Dämmergrau in der Liebe Land
Ich gehe nicht schnell, ich eile nicht;
Mich zieht ein weiches, samtenes Band
Durch Dämmergrau in der Liebe Land,
In ein blaues, mildes Licht.

Wide meadows in the gray of twilight;
The sun has set, the stars appear.
Now I go, making my way to the most
beautiful woman.

Far, through the meadows in the gray
twilight,
Deep into the bushes of jasmine.
Through the gray twilight of love's land,
I go, slowly, without haste;
I am being drawn by a soft, velvet band,
Through the gray twilight of love's land,
Into the gentle blue light.

Ich trage meine Minne

Ich trage meine Minne vor Wonne stumm,
Im Herzen und im Sinne mit mir herum.
Ja, dass ich dich gefunden, du liebes Kind,
Das freut mich alle Tage, die mir beschieden
sind.
Und ob auch der Himmel trübe, kohlschwarz
die Nacht,
Hell leuchtet meiner Liebe goldsonnige
Pracht.
Und lügt auch die Welt in Sünden, so tut mir's
weh,
Die Arge muss erblinden vor deiner Unschuld
Schnee.

I carry my love with delight silently,
In heart and in mind around with me.
Yes, that I you have found, you dear child,
That gladdens me all the days, that are
granted to me.
And even if the sky is cloudy, coal black the
night,
Brightly shines my love's gold-sunny
splendor.
And if the world lies in sinfulness, as much as
it troubles me,
The evil will be blinded by your snow-like
innocence.



School of Music

Senior Recital

Friday, November 1, 2013
Choral Hall, 5:30 p.m.

KELSEY CORAM, soprano with

Yoonsung Yeo, piano
Claire Lefkowitz, mezzo-soprano

Alessandro Scarlatti
(1660-1725)

Stefano Donaudy
(1879-1925)

W.A. Mozart
(1756-1791)

Richard Strauss
(1864-1949)

Kirke Mechem
(b. 1925)

William Schuman
(1910-1992)

Katherine K. Davis
(1892-1980)

Se Florindo é fedele

Sento nel core

“Deh vieni non tardar”
from *Le Nozze di Figaro*

Traum durch die Dämmerung
Ich trage meine Minne

“Fair Robin I Love” from *Tartuffe*

-----Intermission-----

Orpheus with his Lute

Nancy Hanks

Craig Carnelia
(b. 1949)

Claire Lefkowitz, mezzo-soprano

Stephen Flaherty (b.1960)
Lynn Ahrens (b.1948)

Carrie Underwood
Troy Verges
Barry Dean

Marc Shaiman
(b.1959)

Flight

“Your Daddy’s Son”
from *Ragtime*

“Crazy Dreams” from *Smash*

“They Just Keep Moving the Line”
from *Smash*

School of Music COMING EVENTS

Wind Ensemble and Symphony Band

Friday, November 1, Sursa Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Guest Artist Workshop: Jennifer Keller, harp
Saturday, November 2, Choral Hall, 10:00 a.m.

Arts Alive Series: The Academy of St. Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble
Sunday, November 3, Sursa Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Sophomore Recital: Timothy Lewis, piano
Monday, November 4, Sursa Hall, 5:30 p.m.

Faculty Artist Series: DaCamera Brass Quintet
Monday, November 4, Sursa Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Student Jazz Combos

Tuesday, November 5, Choral Hall, 5:30 p.m.

Graduate Recital: Lauren Walker, mezzo-soprano
Tuesday, November 5, Sursa Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Senior Recital: Claire Lefkowitz, mezzo-soprano
Wednesday, November 6, Choral Hall, 5:30 p.m.

Student Composers Forum

Wednesday, November 6, Sursa Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Senior Recital: Phillip James Kandel, bassoon
Wednesday, November 6, Choral Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Series LXVIII - Number 51

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